

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 175
By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study infant mortality due to premature births.

WHEREAS, prematurity is the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States, accounting for twenty-three percent (23%) of deaths within the first month of life, and is the leading cause of death for African-American babies during the first year of life; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of all long-term, neurologic disabilities such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, hearing and visual problems, are related to prematurity; and

WHEREAS, more than four hundred sixty-seven thousand (467,000) babies were born prematurely in the United States in 2000; and

WHEREAS, African-American babies in the United States are nearly twice as likely to be born prematurely than white babies; and

WHEREAS, average hospital charges in 2000 for a prematurity-related newborn stay was averaged almost thirteen (13) times higher; and

WHEREAS, only three (3) states had higher rates of premature births than Tennessee with fourteen percent (14%) of Tennessee newborns born prematurely in 2001; and

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WHEREAS, in 2000, eight thousand four hundred eighty-nine (8,489) Tennessee babies were born prematurely, an average of twenty-three (23) babies per day; and

WHEREAS, over fifteen percent (15%) of African-American babies were born prematurely in 2000, as compared to nearly ten percent (10%) of white babies; and

WHEREAS, African-American babies represented twenty-one percent (21%) of all births in 2000, but thirty percent (30%) of premature births and fifty-seven percent (57%) prematurity-related infant deaths; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans on TennCare were at even higher risk for prematurity, with the uninsured or uninsurable premature birth nearly sixteen percent (16%) and Medicaid-eligible premature birth rates at sixteen percent (16%) in 2000; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that there is hereby created a special joint committee to study infant mortality due to premature deaths.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective Speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly, and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the One Hundred Third General Assembly no later than February 1, 2004, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.